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OO RUEHMA RUEHPA
DE RUEHOS #1416 3451608
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
O 111608Z DEC 06
FM AMCONSUL LAGOS
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8266
RUEHZK/ECOWAS COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHUJA/AMEMBASSY ABUJA PRIORITY 8107
INFO RUFOADA/JAC MOLESWORTH AFB UK
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC
RUCPDOC/DEPT OF COMMERCE WASHDC
RHMCSSU/DEPT OF ENERGY WASHINGTON DC
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHDC
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC

UNCLAS LAGOS 001416

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

DOE FOR GPERSON, CGAY
TREASURY FOR ASEVERENS, SRENENDER, DFIELDS
COMMERCE FOR KBURRESS
STATE PASS USTR FOR ASST USTR SLISER
STATE PASS TRANSPORTATION FOR MARAD
STATE PASS OPIC FOR ZHAN AND MSTUCKART
STATE PASS TDA FOR NCABOT
STATE PASS EXIM FOR JRICHTER
STATE PASS USAID FOR GWEYNAND AND SLAWAETZ

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: EPET ENERG ASEC PTER NI

SUBJECT: CONFIRMED: MEND HOLDS 4 EXPAT HOSTAGES; NO
AMERICANS INVOLVED

REF: LAGOS 1408

¶1. (SBU) According to an Agip contact, three Italian and one Lebanese Agip employees remain hostage. According to this interlocutor, no Americans were involved in the December 7 attack near Brass in Bayelsa. Agip stated that a group purporting to be MEND has claimed responsibility for the kidnapping and said the company is negotiating the hostages' release. (Comment: Over the course of the year, several distinct groups have appropriated for themselves the use of the acronym MEND. For now, we have no reason to believe this is the same "MEND" that engineered the January/Fbruary kidnappings and oil facility attacks this year. End Comment.)

¶2. (U) MEND released a press statement December 8 claiming anyone associated with oil companies in the Niger Delta is subject to roadside and office bombings. Further, this release said both expatriate and Nigerian workers would be targeted. The statement also demanded the Nigerian government to transfer all ownership interests in the oil industry to communities in the Niger Delta and pay, along with oil companies, Niger Delta inhabitants for "50 years of robbery and enslavement." MEND also maintained its traditional requests that impeached governor Alamieseigha of Bayelsa State and jailed militant leader Dokubo Asari be released and that Shell and others provide payment/compensation for their activities in the Niger Delta.

The MEND press statement gives a list of "political" demands. However, we do not know whether the authors of the statement are also the architects of this most recent hostage-taking. Previously, after such statements have been published, the actual hostage takers have bargained for ransom payments and have not assiduously pursued these political goals.

BROWNE